



Children's TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

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Winter Olympics in Sochi
- **Six ways technology is changing play**



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Zoom It

* Denotes an "Editor's Choice."



"If you tell them what to draw, they won't imagine anymore."

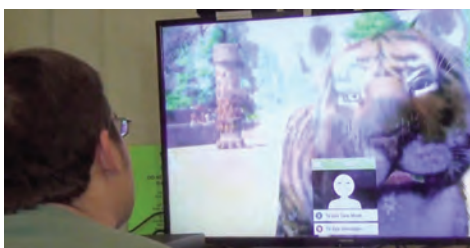


From the video *Unimagined Friends* (<http://vimeo.com/85147506>) from *The Animation Workshop*. Shared by Elio Grieco in the *Dust or Magic* Facebook Group.

Welcome to CTR February 2014

Every day that goes by, another team of smart, motivated designers figures out some clever better way to reach children with technology; tapping into the potential of such things as cameras, microphones and motion sensors. Like it or not, this work is quietly and indelibly changing how the current generation of children play and learn. Here are a few examples from this issue:

- **The Jigsaw Puzzle activity in Nosy Crow's Jack and the Beanstalk** Jigsaw puzzles on touch screens are a dime a dozen. But none that I've seen turn a mirror (driven by your iPad's camera) into the puzzle parts. It makes it possible to wave your hand for a hint -- you visually track the motion from one piece to the next, to see if they fit together. In terms of logical/spatial thinking, this creates a type of problem solving never before possible. Watch it, at <http://youtu.be/KnQxAm7tLEg>.
- **The face recognition activity in Microsoft's Zoo Tycoon for Xbox One.**



Tracking body motion is commonplace. But tracking facial expressions, such as winks, smiles and frowns is a bit more interesting. Watch CTR tester Corey Hawn interact with a lion in Zoo Tycoon, for example. It's pretty amazing stuff, which you can see at <http://youtu.be/BdWlg6CA2RY?t=44s> (the face recognition starts at the :44 second point).

- **Intel's RealSense Camera, Used in Clifford's Reading Adventures.** We all can remember the first time we picked up a Wii controller (back in 2006). Suddenly your body motion was converted into digital information in real time, turning you into a game controller. You became the game. It was mind-blowing, and it was a huge deal for young children, because as we all know, children like to move. The Wii rewarded children for acting in a developmentally appropriate way, which explains why people lined up for hours to buy the first Wii consoles back in 2007. Two years ago, Microsoft's Kinect upped the ante with a motion sensing camera,

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sochi.ru 2014



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Every 4th winter, the world's best snowboarders, skiers, skaters and sledders migrate to the frozen parts of the world to find out who deserves the gold medal. This year, they're all going to a small town in Russia -- Sochi, for the Winter Olympics. At <http://www.sochi2014.com/en> you can see the schedule and learn about the athletes, but that's just the beginning. Let's test your knowledge about the Winter Olympics and then watch some videos from prior Winter Olympics.

1. T/F Tropical countries don't compete in the winter Olympics.

Answer: False. There are athletes from Jamaica and the Virgin Islands listed on the roster, at <http://bit.ly/1e84fgM>

2. Which country has the most Winter Olympics medals?

Hint. It's not the USA, Russia or China. The answer is at <http://bit.ly/1f0MrZ3>.

3. How many Winter Olympic sports are there? The answer is at <http://bit.ly/1jiRrM3>. Hint, there's not nearly as many as the Summer Olympics, and the fraction 15/41 is a clue. Also, you should know that there are eight new sports at this year's Olympics, listed here <http://bit.ly/1mmaFxx>.

4. If you win a gold medal, is it really gold? At <http://cnn-mon.ie/1pS7PM> you learn that, by weight, a "gold" medal is a mixture of metals; mostly silver. It is coated with real gold. The real value of a gold medal is symbolic.

5. Can a kid enter the Olympics? According to Yun Mi Kim of Korea, the answer is yes. She was 13 when she won her speed skating gold medal. At <http://bit.ly/1mmb82u> you can learn the ages of all past medal winners, young and old.

	Alpine skiing
	Biathlon
	Bobsleigh
	Cross country skiing
	Curling
	Figure skating
	Freestyle skiing
	Ice Hockey
	Luge
	Nordic combined
	Short track speed skating
	Skeleton
	Ski jumping
	Snowboarding
	Speed skating

APPLICATION

Make a torch, at <http://bit.ly/LJopay>

Try some Olympic trivia, at <http://bit.ly/1dOySeL> and <http://bit.ly/1e9vKcA>

Follow the news on twitter by following tweets by NBC Sports at [#NBCOlympics](https://twitter.com/NBCOlympics)



Megan's Winter Olympic Videos

Want to see what it's like to "fly" from the point of view of a helmet cam on a ski jumper? LittleClickers Editor Megan Billitti, with help from her sons, made this playlist. <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBVHzUUEKwnuYG7MnkhtyirvxLqSs-je>



but for many, the camera was an add-on. Not anymore. As mentioned before, the cameras in the Xbox One can detect face recognition, and Intel's RealSense camera can watch individual fingers. See the CES demo, at <http://youtu.be/7GEClatQhI> and Clifford's Reading Adventure, <http://youtu.be/xrGdEWVJ2VM>.

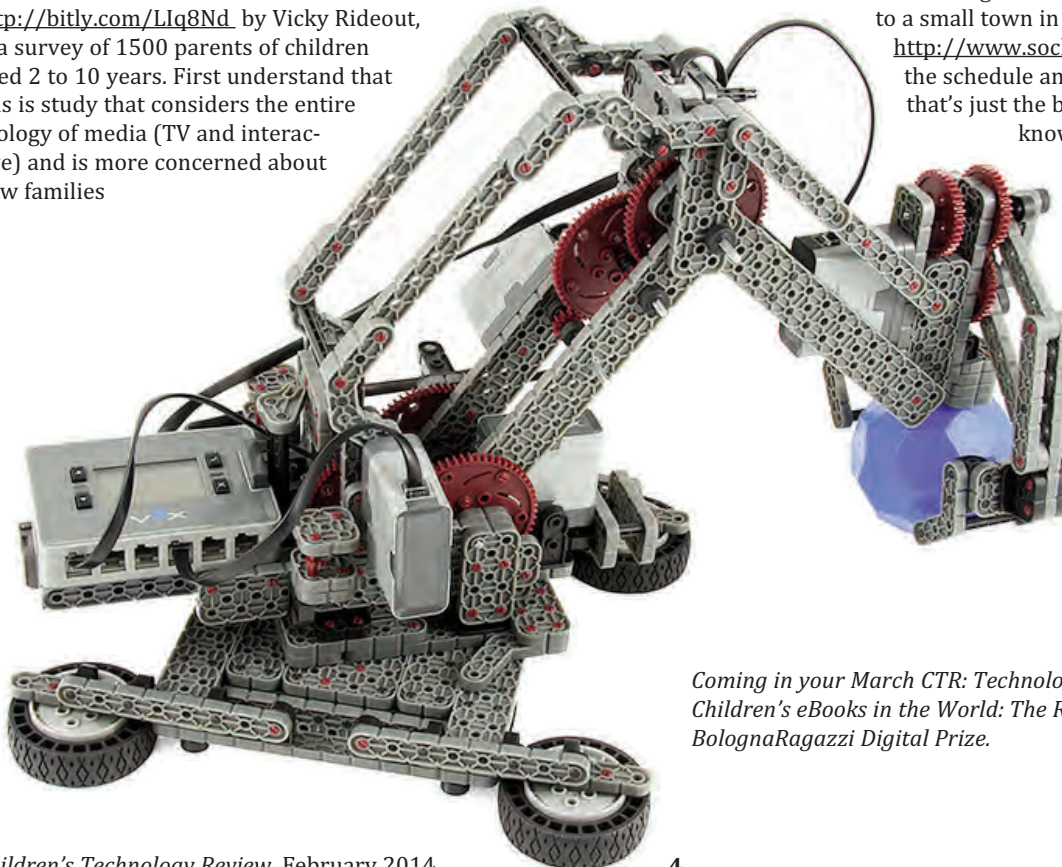
- **Searching for hidden items with friends, on table-sized multi-touch screens.** Preschool teachers all know how children like to huddle around the water or rice table. Until this year, however, shared multi-touch "puddles of pixels" were either too small (the size of an iPad), or too expensive. Not anymore. Consider the \$1,500, 27 inch **IdeaCentre Horizon Multimode Table PC**, running I SPY Challenger. <http://youtu.be/xrGdEWVJ2VM?t=1m10s> or Fuhu's giant Nabi tablet, that might get as large as 25 inches, and cost even less. Both devices have batteries, for wire-free operation. Watch me play a game of Fruit Ninja on one, here <http://youtu.be/cgo5beeP5KE>

- **Talking With Dragons on Fuhu's NFC Tablet.** What if you could play a game like Skylanders or Disney Infinity, without the magic portal or game console? Fuhu, the China-based company that makes the Nabi tablet, showed me an interesting new tablet with an NFC (Near Field Communications) sensor. This gives it the ability to interact with toys that have hidden RFID chips, much like Skylanders or Disney Infinity. Watch the dragons fly, at <http://youtu.be/5n-Lq1VVt-k>

- **Cheaper robotic toys take on LEGO.** Everyone likes more power for less cost. If you're interested in robotics, the new VEX IQ system is worth knowing about. I like the rechargeable lithium-ion batteries (LEGO EV3 still uses AAs), and the VEX IQ controller block has 12 ports compared to six on the EV3. The sensors are similar, including a touch LED, a color eye, gyroscope, bumper switch and distance sensor. VEX PR claims to provide an "easier out of the box experience" for younger children. See the robots in action, at <http://youtu.be/jaleC6AZOvg>.

Cooney Center Releases Survey

A new white paper called **Learning at Home: Families Educational Media Use in America** <http://bitly.com/LIq8Nd> by Vicky Rideout, is a survey of 1500 parents of children aged 2 to 10 years. First understand that this is study that considers the entire ecology of media (TV and interactive) and is more concerned about how families



define educational media. Some findings:

- Most parents view TV watching as educational, providing children are watching Elmo and Dora and not Spongebob. Tablets and mobile devices are used less.
- The youngest children (2-3) spend the most time with "educational" media, and this time decreases dramatically at age 4; replaced by "fun" media.
- Parents consider TV to be more educational than apps and mobile experiences.
- There are lot of lower income kids who do not have access to interactive platforms.



One highlight of the summit was David Kleeman's remarks, which I captured and posted on YouTube, at <http://youtu.be/y50h7MeyLNU>.

LittleClickers: Sochi Winter Olympics

Visit <http://littleclickers.com/winterolympics> to learn why every 4th winter the world's best snowboarders, skiers, skaters and sledgers migrate to the frozen parts of the world to find out who deserves the gold medal. This year, they're all going to a small town in Russia -- Sochi. At <http://www.sochi2014.com/en> you can see the schedule and learn about the athletes, but that's just the beginning. Let's test your knowledge about the Winter Olympics and then watch some videos from prior Winter Olympics.

So, there you have it... another packed month. Enjoy this issue, and have a wonderful February. Spring is on the way.

W. Buckleitner, Editor
CTR

Coming in your March CTR: Technology Toys, and the Best Children's eBooks in the World: The Results of the 3rd Annual BolognaRagazzi Digital Prize.

Dust or Magic

BOLOGNA MASTERCLASS

Announcing the First Annual Dust or Magic Masterclass
Inside the Bologna Children's Book Fair Headquarters, in Bologna, Italy
SUNDAY 23 MARCH, 15:00 - 18:30

WHAT: Topics include lectures by former BolognaRagazzi Digital Award winners, plus a discussion of key influential products in children's interactive publishing determined by this year's jurors for the BolognaRagazzi Digital Award. You'll get to know the leaders in the space, and you'll leave with the tools you need to apply your new knowledge, including the handbook, **Child Development 101 for the Designers of Children's Interactive Media**.

WHO: This year's lecturers include former BolognaRagazzi Digital Award winners Touch Press and Nosy Crow. Discussions will be co-facilitated by Neal Hoskins, curator of the Bologna Children's Book Fair Digital Café, and Warren Buckleitner, the chief judge of the BolognaRagazzi Digital Award.

AGENDA:

3:00 Welcome: Warren Buckleitner, Neal Hoskins and Roberta Chinni

3:05 Non-fiction Case Study: John Cromie, Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer, Touch Press

John will explore how creativity from multiple disciplines is nurtured, and carefully woven into the conception, design and production of Touch Press apps. John's talk will be liberally illustrated with practical examples from acclaimed apps such as *Disney Animated* (Apple Best iPad App of 2013) and *Barefoot World Atlas*. He will touch on tools and techniques, as well as the emerging new digital skills required. Expect to come away with a deeper appreciation of the app as a creative medium, and what it takes to make apps that provoke reviews such as: "You have to see this to believe it. Beautifully designed, perfectly executed. This is what the iPad was made for."

3:50 Demo Lottery: A fun way to view some new apps

4:05 Fiction Case Study: Kate Wilson, Managing Director, Nosy Crow

Last year, Nosy Crow was described by USA Today as "The Steven Spielberg of apps", based on its ground-breaking, multi-award-winning narrative apps, both fiction and non-fiction. Nosy Crow wants to offer children compelling story experiences using the features and opportunities for interactivity and multimedia that touchscreens provide to ensure that reading is not the most boring thing you can do on an iPad. Kate will talk through the elements of Nosy Crow's apps storytelling: concept, writing, illustrating, animating, audio, coding and testing. Among other issues, she'll explore questions like: How do you balance narrative and play? How do you match reading levels with complexity of in-app tasks? What's the link, if any, between physical books and apps?

4:50 Coffee

5:05 Demos of Magic, and Dust from the 2014 BolognaRagazzi Digital Award Winners and Entries by Warren Buckleitner

5.35 Demo Lottery: A fun way for attendees to see and try new apps.

5.45 Closing Panel: State of the App with Neal Hoskins, Warren Buckleitner, Kate Wilson and John Cromie

BOLOGNA
DIGITAL



John Cromie
Touch Press



Kate Wilson
Nosy Crow

TO REGISTER: To receive a booking form please visit the URL below and provide your name and email with this form.

<http://dustormagic.com/masterclass/>



Feature Reviews

FEBRUARY, 2014

Here's an alphabetical listing of new products, along with a full review, specific ratings and tester feedback. The "Entry Date" refers to the date we first learned of the product.

18 Wheels of Steel American Long Haul

First released in 2007, 18 Wheels of Steel American Long Haul is a disk-based PC game. CTR tester Corey said "I have nothing else to review and I am anticipating American Truck Simulator's release. Long Haul plays like any other trucking simulator and has the same engine as Haulin'. American Long Haul has both U.S. and Canadian cities, and a bit of Mexico as well.

I liked the environments, and while not perfect, some cities resemble their real life counterparts. Nice touches include the "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign, New York's urban jungle; and a few cities covered with snow such as Winnipeg, Calgary, Bismarck, and Great Falls.

You make money by hauling goods from city to city, and you can choose from a variety of trucks and trailers. If a trailer is damaged, it loses value and you will be paid less.

Weaknesses include fines that are too stiff for minor traffic violations (you can be fined over \$1,000-\$3,000) and you don't have the option to turn off police enforcement of traffic laws.

While the graphics for American Long Haul are OK, they look like they are from the PS2/ Xbox 360 generation. Some of the cars lack detail. Overall, 18 Wheels of Steel American Long Haul is a good trucking simulator but at times it feels like more of a chore.

Pros: great environments and fun road trip play. Cons: loss of certain options from the previous title, Pedal to the Metal and frivolous police fines.

Details: ValuSoft, www.valusoft.com. Price: \$20. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Microsoft Windows. Teaches/Purpose: geography, economics. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 1/27/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	8
Educational	9
Entertaining	7
Design Features	8
Good Value	8

80%



Alphabet of Dinosaurs: Smithsonian Alphabet Books

Here's another solid Oceanhouse Media app, with clear sounds, illustrations (by Thomas Buchs, Karen Carr, Adrian Chestermann and Trevor Reaveley) and a high interest topic that will pull children kids in.


As with other Oceanhouse Media apps, you get highlighted narration, tappable words and pictures, and the ability to record your own narration to share it with others. The reading supports are excellent.

This is an official Smithsonian Institution licensed app, with dinosaurs that are listed alphabetically (from A to Z).

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: alphabet, dinosaurs, science, reading. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 1/23/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	10
Educational	9
Entertaining	7
Design Features	9
Good Value	9

88%






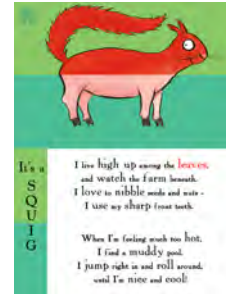

Axel Scheffler's Flip Flap Farm

What do you get when you cross a goat with a turkey? Why, a gurkey, of course! What about a pig with a sheep? Well, that would be a peep, naturally! Inspired by the original storybook app, Animal SnApp: Farm, Axel Scheffler's Flip Flap Farm contains 12 animals; with 121 possible combinations that create silly, simple names and a solid language experience.

Swipe the two halves of each character to create new animals and hear each poem read aloud; or you can swipe on the blocks of text, to change the animal -- a nice touch. With original artwork by Axel Scheffler.

Details: Nosy Crow, www.nosycrow.com. Price: \$.99. Ages: 4-7. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 1/22/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	90%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	


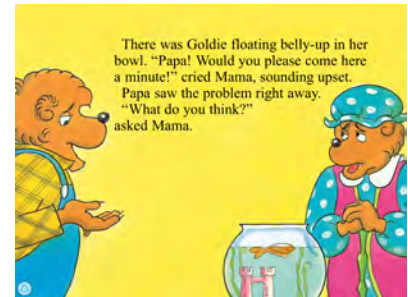
Berenstain Bears Lose A Friend, The

This 27 screen story brings another Berenstain Bears story to the touch screen, with quality text scaffolding techniques that includes object labeling by way of zoom out word labels, touch-and-hear text, and the ability to record your own narration. So instead of a stranger's voice coming out of your iPad, you can hear somebody meaningful.

In the story, Sister Bear's heart is broken when her dear pet fish Goldie dies. The story creates a context to discuss a very hard topic for children -- death and dying. The illustrations, sounds and narration are all top notch.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 4-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: death of a pet, reading, scaffolding, death and dying, life cycles. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 12/12/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	10	90%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	9	

Big Grips Slim

We tried the new "slim" on our iPad 3, and found that it wasn't very slim. While it offered excellent protection, it also directed the sound from the speaker toward the back of the device. In addition, it was hard to get the charger into place, although once a graphics adapter was plugged in, we found it handy, because the fat frame held it from coming loose.

Also available: the Big Grips Wedge (\$20), a stand that works with the Big Grips Slim and allows you to stand up your iPad to watch movies, etc.; the Big Grips Buddy (\$20), a case for your iPod Touch; the Big Grips Frame for iPad Air (\$35); and the Big Grips Slim for iPad Air (\$30).

Details: KEM Ventures, Inc., www.biggrips.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: a foam frame and stand for tablets . Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 1/10/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	80%
Design Features	7	
Durability and Safety	8	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	8	





Busytown Mysteries

This is a nicely done, slightly interactive animated mystery featuring Richard Scarry inspired Busytown characters. This is a "hybrid" app; mixing TV-quality video from the DHX Media Busytown TV series, with crisp interactive screen elements. These include touching anywhere to see a snowflake, games of concentration, and touch-and-hear text that is instantly highlighted, one word at a time.

This app uses a "freeview" technique, that requires an Internet connection. You can download one teaser episode free; additional episodes, called toontales, can be downloaded buffet style, and are sold for \$2.99 each as in-app sales. Once they are downloaded, they stay on your device.

The animation looks great on an iPad's screen, and the narration and sounds are TV quality. We didn't like the frequent nags to swipe to the next page. Created in Vancouver, Canada by Loud Crow using the Verso story engine.

Details: Loud Crow, . Price: \$2.99 per episode. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad (60 MB) . Teaches/Purpose: memory. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 1/7/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	86%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	9	



Design and Play: Monster Cute Jewels

Here's a creative twist on a very common ECE activity -- making patterns with beads. The only difference is that you're making beads for zany looking monsters, using 3D beads made from themed collections of things like sea creatures, monster parts, colored glass, and fruit. As you decorate your monster, they say very random things, in a variety of languages. A design mode gives you the option of using your camera, so you can make a necklace over a picture.

The play mode gives you timed challenges, where you assemble a necklace as quickly as possible to earn points. The better you do, the harder the challenge.

Content includes fourteen interactive monsters, each with a collection of sounds and life-like animated effects; and more jewel collections and monsters are available as in-app purchases. The in-app purchase is secured by a math problem and a typical collection of jewels costs \$.99.

Details: Croco Studio, www.crocostudio.com. Price: \$.99 with in-app sales. Ages: 3 -6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 6.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: symmetry, patterns, seriation. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 12/13/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	88%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	



Disney Princess Royal Salon

Help! Cinderella, Ariel, Belle and Rapunzel are in need of a hair style, outfit, shoes and accessories in time for one of four special events. Each event (a Royal Ball, Masquerade Party, Holiday Celebration or a special event, associated with the Princess world). The quality is excellent -- each princess looks like she stepped right out of her associated world; and the narration is excellent.

As you might expect, there's no shortage of pink, ribbons, sparkles and girlish stereotypes. The entire experience is also extremely well designed, to provide an excellent "no fail" mix and match experience that is well age-gated, with no risk of in-app sales. Girls will love this app.

Need to know: At best this is template-based creativity with little room for out of the ordinary outfits. This is a big download, at 721 MB. Work can be saved in your photo album. Developed by smallplanet for Disney Digital Books.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 5-12. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later, 721 MB). Teaches/Purpose: mix-and-match creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 12/30/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	84%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	





Elements in Action

First there was The Elements. Now comes Elements in Action, an app that is smaller in download size and price.

This time you explore 79 videos of the elements. The videos were shot by Max Whitby in partnership with Theodore Gray, author of the book and app The Elements.

What happens when highly reactive rubidium is dropped into water? Or when a cannonball is placed in a pool of mercury? The Elements in Action shows you one definitive demonstration for (almost) every element, ranging from the bizarre to the sublime, all assembled in one place for you to view in the comfort and safety of your iPad, with very little danger of death by fire, dismemberment, or poisoning.

The Elements in Action works as a stand-alone app but also is designed to enhance the original app, The Elements: A Visual Exploration. When installed together, the two apps find each other and link together, allowing you to flip between viewing the elements as objects of contemplation in the original, and objects of dynamic action in the second.

Translated into: English, Catalan, Croatian, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish.

Details: Touch Press, www.touchpress.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad (517 MB). Teaches/Purpose: periodic table. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 1/7/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	90%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	9	



Hexbug Battle Spider

The Hexbug Battle Spider is the first mechanical Hexbug designed for two-person play. But they burn unconventional batteries and after you've knocked out your partner a few times, the play potential decreases.

The battling robots have a remote control and feature futuristic voice and sound effects, along with high-tech infrared battling capabilities. The six-legged spiders feature 360 degree steering and an LED forward eye, allowing you to maneuver it around objects and control precisely where it goes when battling its opponent. Battle Spiders feature realistic recoil and physical response when hit and when shooting, as well as a life sensor that measures each hit. The two channel remote control lets you operate multiple bugs independently or at the same time. Requires five button cell batteries, two for the remote and three for the spider (included). See the video, at <http://youtu.be/R9AnlHgdrnk>

Details: Innovation First, Inc., www.hexbug.com. Price: \$30. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: remote controls. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.9 stars. Entry date: 1/28/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	78%
Educational	6	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	



I Learn With Transportation

Featuring playful animated vehicles designed to deliver child-controlled language exploration in Spanish or English, this app lets children touch and hear the labels for types of vehicles, shapes, numbers up to ten, colors and sounds.

Content includes 21 vehicles shown in six common environments such as outer space, the ocean, the park and so on. The screen is presented so that random effects are shown. Options let you toggle the narration and background music; plus there's a timed page turn feature that might be useful for some teaching situations. As former teachers, we always like seeing these types of features.

On our wish list -- the ability let a the child change languages, and a greater range of things to do with the vehicles.

This app comes from the highly regarded Spanish studio, Dada Company, with illustrations by Sergio Alfonso. As an early informal introduction to Spanish or English, this is an excellent experience that is full of items that will be meaningful to a young child.

Details: DADA Company, www.dadacompany.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: language, reading, Spanish, English, logic, classification, colors shapes. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 12/20/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	10	88%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	10	





Jack and the Beanstalk by Nosy Crow

Nosy Crow once again gives a royalty-free fairy tale the royal treatment with first rate illustration and child narration, and a full set of well designed activities. In short, download this app... you won't be sorry. Here's a closer look.

As with many ebooks, you start with the choice of two confusing options -- "Read and Play" and "Read by Myself" (ironically, both require reading). The second choice provides more of a book-like experience with no narration, plus a choice about the pacing of the text bubbles. The "Read and Play" mode turns on the word highlighting and the outstanding child narration.

Weaknesses include excessive prompting (in mode one, about every 7 seconds) and some confusing activities, such as when you are encouraged to climb the beanstalk, but never reach the top. One tester tried for 20 minutes, before giving up. The same thing happens when you are asked to take your cow to market -- you're promoted to speed up or slow down, to no avail... you never get anywhere. These are minor problems, because you can always turn the page to continue.

Besides the crisp interactivity, there's some tilt-driven visual effects, plus two levels of zoom. The giant's castle contains nine innovative activities that can be played in any order. You can assemble a broken mirror, comprised of the live video feed from our iPad's camera. Another activity asks you to gently lift up a goose to see if it is hiding the golden egg. If you move too fast, you wake the giant, which starts a chase scene.

As with other Nosy Crow stories, potentially offensive or frightening themes have been humorously edited -- no English blood is smelled, and no giants were harmed when the beanstalk is chopped down. There is also a clear, very happy ending involving a hero's dinner.

The bottom line? This is another excellent app from Nosy Crow with enough content to keep children coming back, time and time again. Just make sure children know that it is OK to skip ahead. See also Jack and the Beanstalk by Mindshapes for another well designed edition of the story.

Details: Nosy Crow, www.nosycrow.com. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 3-10. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch. Teaches/Purpose: reading, classification, spatial relations, memory, music, temporal relations. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 1/30/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	9
Entertaining	10
Design Features	8
Good Value	9

90%



Jake's Never Land Shapes and Patterns

Solid Disney characters and quality narration meet mediocre interactive design in this combination ebook/shape app.

Content includes three didactic shape games that vary in quality but are not well integrated into the story, and a Puppet making activity that lets you put your own photo inside a pirate's outfit and record one line of dialog. Puppets cannot be saved and there is no text highlighting or scaffolding.

Features included multiple levels and the ability to toggle the sounds and music on/off. All purchase options are nicely age gated.

Instructions are repetitious and the animated elements in the story don't map exactly onto the activities. For example, when Jake makes a shadow, his hands don't match the shadow. The bottom line? Not bad, but it could be better. Note that this is a big app; over 800 MB. Developed in Unity 4.0.0f7 with Panarea Digital. The education advisor was Linda Labbo from the University of Georgia.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad (800 MB). Teaches/Purpose: reading, shapes, patterns. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 1/6/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	8
Educational	7
Entertaining	9
Design Features	8
Good Value	8

80%






Journeys of Invention

Eighty rare and historic objects -- like an Apple 1 and the Apollo 10 command module -- are brought to life on your iPad's screen, through crisp Touch Press design. Many of the items are presented as 360 degree rotating images, so they can be examined from every angle.

The items come from the Science Museum in London, and are presented by way of 14 interactive stories written by the curators. Warning, this is the type of app you can spend hours exploring. The interactive features vary. You can immerse yourself in the Apollo 10 Command Module, examine a flea with Robert Hooke's 17th-century microscope, explore the Large Hadron Collider, or encode a secret message with a World War II Enigma Machine and share it with your friends to decipher. They didn't have social media in WWII.

Details: Touch Press, www.touchpress.com. Price: \$9.99. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: science, history. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.9 stars. Entry date: 1/6/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	98%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	10	




LEGO Friends Storymaker

Why read a book when you can make one? This free set of LEGO branded creativity tools has glitches when it comes time to publish, but it succeeds in giving children a nice set of creativity props. These include backgrounds, LEGO friends characters (targeting girls), stamps, and LEGO-related items. A camera option lets you use your own photo as a background, and the characters can be easily moved, resized or turned. It is also easy to turn on/off the background music, which is a good thing, because it quickly becomes repetitive.

The text entry features could be better (you can't move blocks of text around) and the voice recording feature is buggy (we couldn't get it to work). Also publishing your story is limited to replaying the text in Voice Dream, a text-to-speech generator. But you can't see the pictures.

For a free app, it isn't bad. But it could be much better. This app was made for LEGO by CauseLabs.

Details: LEGO Americas, www.lego.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 10/14/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	8	84%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	9	




Magical Fairy Friends: Dorothy the Rainbow Fairy

Dorothy the Rainbow Fairy is a 16 screen ebook that is loosely based on the science of light, with graphic elements that you can control. While the narrative is loose (about a Rainbow Fairy who makes all the rainbows), each screen contains items that you can control; and each illustrates where rainbows take place. Each page has a rainbow colored pull tab that lets you activate a rainbow-related graphic. This app has excellent interactive design, which makes up for the limited story and lower quality illustrations. This is the first in a series of fully interactive pop-up style eBooks for children, created by a father-daughter team to help encourage reading. Each word can be narrated with a touch, providing a nice scaffold toward meaning for a non-reader.

Details: The Integrated Agency, <https://www.facebook.com/MagicalFairyFriends>. Price: \$.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, logic, science, light. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 1/27/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	88%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	






Mickey Mouse: Mash-Up

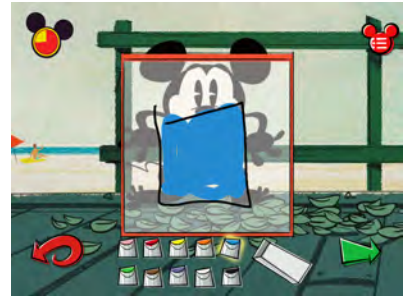
This collection of coloring tools and six arcade-style games is fused into a high quality Disney cartoon called No Service. In the story, Mickey and Donald swap clothing to gain the attention of Minnie Mouse and Daisy Duck (with no shortage of gender stereotyping). To avoid embarrassment they try on different outfits or hide behind items that you draw. Throughout the story, you can play different games.

The eleven activities vary in quality. The two worst involve Pinball (too hard) and a flying game where you're supposed to "fly" Mickey back to the ground, after he's been blown into the air, off the beach. In addition, some of the drawing games are timed, making you feel rushed.

The drawing tools are presented on two menus, on different screens, so children can't draw and color on the same app. The tools also don't match the drawing challenges. For example, you are asked to trace Mickey Mouse, but the drawing area is too small to match the model that is shown. This is a great idea. If the activities were better designed, and children could see their work used more prominently in the story, it might work. Nice touches include the ability to draw your own name and sketch on a driver's license. Developed by Genera Interactive for Disney.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 6-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: drawing, creativity. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.7 stars. Entry date: 1/10/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	74%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	7	



Miles and Miles of Reptiles - All About Reptiles

Oceanhouse Media's The Cat in the Hat Learning Library continues to expand, with this playful collection of facts about reptiles, including snakes, lizards, turtles, and crocodiles. As you explore the text or the pictures, you can touch any word to hear how it sounds, plus see it zoom out to label an associated picture in the story.

Highlighted words are linked to detailed information boxes. Everything is narrated, and the mixture of information and clear illustrations gives this app the feel of a hands on museum. If you're looking for games, this isn't your app.

As with other Oceanhouse Media apps, it is easy to jump around to different screens or add your own narration.

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 5-10. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: reading, science, biology, reptiles. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 1/30/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	86%
Educational	9	
Entertaining	7	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	10	



Minnie Fashion Tour

Dress up experiences are common these days, but not many let you use the camera to create and save your own patterns, and see them modeled on 3D models. You start with either Minnie Mouse or Daisy Duck, and can rotate through menus of shoes, dresses, head-ware and accessories. There's also a choice of pets which cannot be dressed.

Once you've created and saved your fashion, you can have a fashion show, on a stage that lets you manage the music and lighting. This is a good idea, but there's a narrow range of music and light options and it's not possible to easily rotate the models. Some parents or teachers may not appreciate the girlie behaviors coming from Daisy and Minnie, and there's no shortage of pink. But there are no body image issues to deal with -- these are animated figures. Nice touches include the 3D modeling (the same used in Mickey Mouse Clubhouse: Paint & Play). It's also possible to make animated clothing. You can also turn on or off the music in the parent options. All external links and in-app sales are nicely walled off behind an age gate. All in all, this is a solid, highly Disneyfied creativity experience that is well worth the \$5.

Details: Disney Publishing Worldwide, www.DisneyDigitalBooks.com. Price: \$4.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 6.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: creativity, fashion. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 12/30/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	88%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	





Movable Alphabet - A Montessori Approach to Language

There are now over 500 Montessori-related apps in the iTunes store, and as you might expect, quality varies. This is one of the low quality examples. It starts by offering a confusing main menu with two choices: Word Sets and Build Your Own Words. Other than dragging and dropping letters into place, there's not much to do, and you can't get rid of letters you don't use.

Maria Montessori also would not have liked the in-app sales techniques used to offer additional word sets. Content includes 40 clear images of simple words and lots of instructions.

Produced by Michigan based Mobile Montessori for Rantek Inc. This app is one of many Montessori-branded apps.

Details: Mobile Montessori, www.mobilemontessori.org. Price: \$3.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad (45 MB). Teaches/Purpose: letter recognition, spelling. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 1.4 stars. Entry date: 1/2/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	2	28%
Educational	3	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	3	
Good Value	3	



Neos 360 Accessible

This is a newer (2013) adaptation of the Neos 360 System from playground equipment manufacturer Playworld Systems. It received the 2014 KAPi Prize for innovation for enhancing outdoor play.

There are four models of NEOS systems: 360 Original (\$28,665), 360 Accessible (\$28,665), Neos Ring (\$16,935) and the NEOS Wall (\$38,459). Note that the price does not include installation, and external wiring and power is required. Prices are as of January 2014.

360 Accessible (ADA version) is a modified version of the original 360, with lowered buttons that are within reach of wheelchairs. There are eight games, selected by a control panel. The games are timed and use a simple scoring mechanism to deliver simple games that reward listening, reflexes and fast reactions. Many of the game are delivered in short 45 second sessions; and all the games are designed so a group of children can play at once. More information at www.PlayNEOS.com. See the CTR video from CES 2014 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9csOPWh2Y5I>

Details: Playworld Systems, Inc., www.playworldsystems.com. Price: \$28,665. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: gross motor coordination, strategy. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 1/12/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	94%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	8	



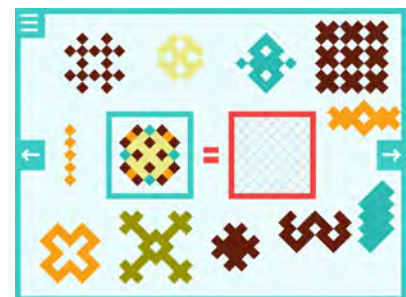
OverColor

This clever visual brainteaser asks you to copy a model, using a set of geometric overlays. The puzzles start easy and get harder; or you can easily jump to a harder level from the main menu. Each puzzle uses the same 49 square grid, set at a diagonal.

There are 100 puzzles, organized into four levels. The easiest has just two parts; the hardest can have as many as five. Coming up with the correct answer requires high levels of visual memory. The app provides instant feedback when you've correctly solved the puzzle. There's no time pressure, but there are also no hints, and no game element. This is a clean, simple, addictive puzzle that presents an authentic high quality problem solving opportunity. Created in the Ukraine by Visualizers for Popapp Factory.

Details: Popapp Factory, www.popappfactory.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: spatial relations, symmetry, memory, logic, visual discrimination. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 11/27/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	92%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	8	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	10	





Pines to Vines - The Forest Biome

This poster-child example of what a tablet-delivered textbook can look like, Pines to Vines is a large (378 MB) stand-alone app, that mixes traditional text with interactive illustrations and dynamic maps. Despite some clunky navigation features and less than in-depth content, the app demonstrates how linear text can be enhanced and in some cases amplified by interactive features. Especially noteworthy: the ability to change the reading level on the fly.

Content includes six chapters that introduce the concept of forests, and then examine different types of forests (e.g., tropical vs. boreal) as well as special types of forests, different types of wildlife, and threats to forests.

The app was developed in collaboration with Oregon State University's Department of Forestry. Each chapter has a test, that can be automatically linked to a teacher's dropbox or email account. Note that both require a live Internet connection. It is not possible to take a quiz or see the answers unless the tablet is online; a rather disappointing discovery.

This is part of the "Crack the Books" series of interactive digital books. Targeting 3rd to 5th grade science and social studies core curriculum concepts, the digital textbooks allow for reading level adjustment from 1st grade to 8th grade, making it possible for all students in a classroom to access the same curriculum content regardless of their reading ability.

Details: Mobile Education Store, www.mobile-educationstore.com. Price: \$9.99. Ages: 7-12. Platform: iPad (378 MB). Teaches/Purpose: ecology, forests, ecosystems, maps, geography. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.4 stars. Entry date: 10/15/2013. [WB]

PJ's PJs - Giraffes!

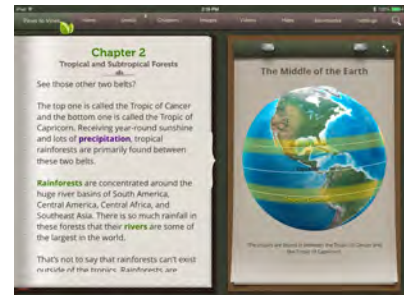
Clear fictional illustrations and nice quality music help children better understand Giraffes. There's some nice interactive illustrations, but no interactive text features (scaffolding) for emerging readers.

In the story Percival Jenkins loves bedtime and his amazing animal pajamas. Children will see what happens when PJ puts on his pajamas, and join him on an adventure in Africa where they will discover that giraffes eat, why they don't like to bathe, the sounds they make and so on. There's a bit of limited interactivity on each page that is generally well designed. The narration has a British accent, and the excellent illustrations are by Swedish artist Gustav Dejert. This is the first of three book series featuring PJ and his adventures.

Details: Ink Robin, www.inkrobin.com. Price: \$free. Ages: 2-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone (iOS 6 or later). Teaches/Purpose: reading, science, Giraffes, animals. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 1/27/2014. [WB]

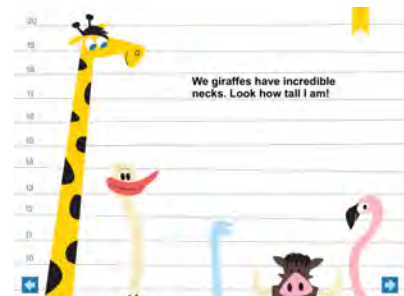
Ease of Use	9
Educational	10
Entertaining	N
Design Features	8
Good Value	8

88%



Ease of Use	9
Educational	8
Entertaining	7
Design Features	7
Good Value	9

80%





Plants vs. Zombies 2: It's About Time

This classic strategy timing game has been infused with a new set of interactive play opportunities, zombie puns and in-app purchase options. If you've played the original version, you won't be disappointed. The idea is the same -- to stop a slowly approaching crowd of zombies by placing things in their way. Timing and planning are needed in order to set up a balanced set of obstacles, and the entire experience is an excellent logical thinking opportunity.

This edition has a time-travel theme with zombies from various time periods. The game was designed as an ever-expanding universe, offering regular content updates, including new worlds full of new plants, zombies and challenges beyond the first three found in the initial game release. We played the free version, and found plenty to do, although strong-armed in-app sales techniques are used. A set of coins costs \$10, although most items are in the \$3 range. Why buy? To "enhance your gameplay."

Content includes three new worlds, 60 levels (more planned), new plants and zombies, plant food to "supercharge your floral defenses" and touch-screen power-ups that let you pinch, flick and zap zombies directly.

Created by PopCap Games, a division of Electronic Arts Inc.

Details: PopCap Games, www.popcap.com. Price: \$free with InApp Purchases. Ages: 10-up. Platform: iPad, Android. Teaches/Purpose: logic, timing. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.6 stars. Entry date: 1/27/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Educational	9
Entertaining	10
Design Features	9
Good Value	9

92%



Polaroid Kids Tablet 2

This second edition tablet still has nice front panel controls, so it's easy to find the on/off button or adjust the volume. But the batteries are weak, speakers mid-range, and the screen quality is average. The biggest drawback, however, is that there is no access to the Google Play app store.

The features are typical: a 7" display, a dual-core processor and an Android 4.2 operating system, plus parental controls, and a custom app shop designed to make it possible for children to buy their own apps.

There's 1 GB of RAM, 8 GB of internal memory and an SD card slot for expansion, plus front and rear cameras. Polaroid Kids Tablet 2 is an ages 4-up tablet that is geared for children. This tablet is 7 inch HD + Dual-Core and can be charged by connecting the USB cord to a USB port on a computer, or you can use the included charging adapter.

Details: Polaroid, www.polaroid.com. Price: \$150. Ages: 4-up. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: An Android-based tablet for children. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4 stars. Entry date: 1/23/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9
Durability and Safety	9
App Selection	6
Design Features	8
Good Value	8

80%





Sago Mini Doodlecast

Note: This was formerly called DoodleCast for Kids by zinc Roe.

This drawing app lets you simultaneously record your voice as you draw, then play back your drawings to be shared.

It is a "talk and draw" experience that makes self-narrating and sharing a drawing into a nearly one-step process, providing you have an iPad. In addition, having an active YouTube account is handy for the optional sharing part.

The app features 30 drawing prompts, i.e. simple questions designed to prompt a drawing. These include topics like "eat", "street", "eyes", and so on.

You can choose a prompt or start from scratch, and the app records the entire drawing process along with audio from the microphone to create short videos. The app is designed as a creative activity and teaching aid, allowing children to express themselves through art and conversation, and can be used for anything from practicing counting and letters to talking about experiences and feelings. Features include: over 30 storytelling prompts; easy-to-use drawing tools; records every stroke, word and giggle; automatically saves your movies; export videos to your camera roll; and supports 14 languages including Spanish, French, German, Russian, Japanese and Mandarin. There are no in-app purchases or third-party advertising.

This is a very important app; a fact that was recognized by the 2012 KAPi jurors when they called DoodleCast the "best app for younger children."

The process is what's important here -- this app turns the iPad into an ideal experience to share with an adult.

Details: Sago Sago, www.sagosago.com. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 2-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: creativity, language. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.8 stars. Entry date: 7/25/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	95%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	N	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	10	



Scribblenauts Unmasked: A DC Comics Adventure

You are Maxwell, in a DC Comics city such as Gotham City, Metropolis or Atlantis. In order to stop various evil schemes, you type or sketch words to summon items from a library of thousands of DC Comics characters and objects.

Features include Super Hero Creator – on Wii U and PC that lets you create your own Super Hero or Super Villain. If your game console is connected, you can share creations with others, or download another player's super villain into your game. If needed, you can summon the Batcomputer, an in-game encyclopedia that lists the names and descriptions of objects from the DC Comics Universe. Parents can play along and help with the Sidekick Mode ... using a Wii Remote to control any object in game. Developed by 5TH Cell. Prices are \$60 for the Wii U and \$40 for the 3DS.

Corey said "I like how this game gives you a specific challenge. The graphics and gameplay are on par with past Unlimited Scribblenauts titles. The superhero theme brings excitement to the story. If you've liked Scribblenauts in the past, you'll like this game."

Details: Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, Inc., www.warnerbros.com. Price: \$60. Ages: 7-up. Platform: Wii U, Nintendo DS. Teaches/Purpose: creativity, language, writing. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.5 stars. Entry date: 6/12/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	90%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	8	





Shiny Bakery

Cooking can be messy and complicated; but not with this app. The easy to use, clean interface makes it an ideal starter app for older preschoolers or Pre-K learners. As an added bonus, there's a solid dose of early math skills that are grounded in reality, including counting up to ten ("can you add five eggs") and fractions (can you share the cake equally between two people?).

Often called "early number sense," this is the type of app that every teacher likes although there are a few missed opportunities. If you make a mistake, say, by adding an extra egg, you get a meaningless splat. It would be better to illustrate the error by comparing the quantities. The recipes are sort of real (using eggs, flower and butter), but fictional items (like shoes and fish) are also included, which removes the realism from the task. Finally, it would be good if the oven had a timer that was developmentally appropriate for younger children.

All in all however, these are minor gripes. This app does a lot for the price, and the cooking theme is one children can relate to. See also Shiny Circus (CTR, March 2014).

Details: Shiny Things, www.getshinythings.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-6. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 7.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: counting, logic, math, fractions, equiliancy. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 1/9/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	84%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	8	



Sock Monster

From Scotland, comes a ten screen story that provides an answer to the age-old question: "where do missing socks go?"

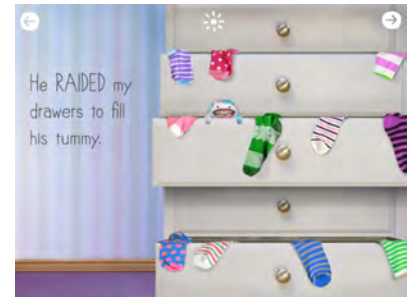
Sock Monster is a small squirrel-sized creature with human-looking teeth, who loves socks. He eats them on each page, with your assistance.

There is no text scaffolding or language options, and the narration has a Scottish accent. We didn't like how it asks you to rate the app on the last page, although external web access is age-gated.

Strengths include exposure to quality art. While the story is short, it is one that children will relate to. Created and narrated by Scottish author / illustrator Lorna Freytag.

Details: Junoberry, <http://junoberry.com/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 2-5. Platform: iPad (Requires iOS 5.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: classification. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.2 stars. Entry date: 10/15/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	84%
Educational	7	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	8	
Good Value	9	



Sonic Lost World

Sonic is fast and fun, in this co-op or competitive two player racing game. We tested the Wii U version.

In the story, Dr. Eggman has harnessed the power of six menacing creatures (the Deadly Six). You help Sonic, with new moves and color powers -- vaulting over obstacles, sky diving between islands, and exploding into enemies.

Exclusive Wii U features include the ability to tilt, touch and aim; plus two screen play (both on the TV and on the Wii U controller). The 3DS version is the "first handheld Sonic game to feature 3D levels." It is possible to share your gadgets between the Wii U and Nintendo 3DS versions.

Our tester, Corey, said: This game will challenge you with some tricky moves that let you spin and kick, using combinations of keys. I liked the new designs; with surprise in each level but the controls can be hard to learn.

Details: Sega of America, Inc., www.sega.com. Price: \$50. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Wii U, Nintendo 3DS. Teaches/Purpose: temporal relations, spatial relations, timing logic, maps. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.3 stars. Entry date: 6/12/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	86%
Educational	8	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	9	
Good Value	9	





Walking With Dinosaurs: Dino Run

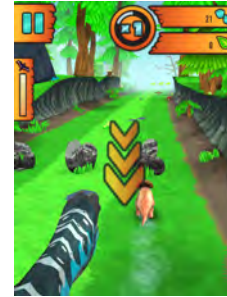
Fun at first, but limited from a gaming point of view, this "Temple Run" type of running game is very different than previous Walking With Dinosaurs apps.

Dinosaur information has been replaced by in-app sales and an addicting game format, where you have to outrun a bigger dinosaur, eager to eat you.

Features include a variety of levels that get progressively harder, realistic looking dinosaurs, and random events (falling rocks and different things to collect) to keep things interesting. The intentions are noble; to let children play with Cretaceous Period ideas. But our testers found the first few levels too hard. Requires 64.9 MB. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09w80SiWVJs>. Created in Australia by M5859 Studios

Details: M5859 Studios, <http://insidetheworldofdinosaurs.com/>. Price: \$free. Ages: 7-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone. Teaches/Purpose: timing. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 3.6 stars. Entry date: 12/21/2013. [WB]

Ease of Use	7	72%
Educational	6	
Entertaining	9	
Design Features	7	
Good Value	7	



Zoo Tycoon for Xbox One

When does hardware make software better? When it's Zoo Tycoon, running on the new Xbox One game console. As with previous versions, Zoo Tycoon features several modes. You can build your own zoo, or manage the zoo elements, in a campaign mode. There's also a freeform option, in case you want to just explore.

The campaign is timed but you're given plenty of time to complete the tasks. If you do, you can unlock new exhibits, concessions, decorations, mini-exhibits, and facilities.

Content includes over 100 animal types, with a Zoopedia that contains interesting facts. Taking care of animals is taken seriously in this game. You have to match the animal with the right food and habitat. If you make a mistake, the animals are removed (there's no death element). You quickly learn that the Monkeys will prosper in the tropics; while the bears are best suited for Alpine and Tundra.

Fun elements include driving buggies around the looping zoo paths; playing with the voice commands, feeding the animals by reaching into the screen, washing the elephants with a hose, and mimicking an animal's actions using a mirror mode.

When in Zoo mode, you can see a beautiful landscape that matches the habitat. For example, Alaska lets you look at beautiful mountains. I also like the interactive mini-games such as washing, feeding, and looking through animals at exhibits.

Weaknesses include long loading times, and some tasks that start to feel tedious. Also the Kinect controls can be picky, requiring careful adjustment. Finally, we noticed that there were some menu options pertaining to animal and zoo sharing that requires an Xbox Gold subscription. This is vaguely labeled on the back of the jewelcase, but not on the menus themselves. Note that there are some significant differences in both game play and content between the Xbox One and Xbox 360 versions.

All in all, this dazzling zoo sim raises the bar for bringing a sense of realism to a business/science sim, in part due to the Xbox One's motion and sound sensing abilities.

Details: Microsoft Game Studios, www.microsoft.com/games. Price: \$60. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Xbox One*, Xbox 360. Teaches/Purpose: strategy. Rating (1 to 5 stars): 4.7 stars. Entry date: 1/15/2014. [WB]

Ease of Use	9	94%
Educational	10	
Entertaining	10	
Design Features	10	
Good Value	8	





Future Releases & Updates

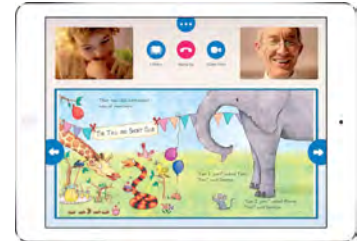
FEBRUARY, 2014

This section contains a listing of products in the process of being reviewed, but not yet rated. We also include significant updates of older products.

Caribu

This app lets children and their loved ones video call and read together, no matter where they are. It is designed for separated families, and combines children's ebooks with video calling. Users can read picture books at the same time as seeing and hearing each other through a video call, all on their iPad. The app comes loaded with one free book, so once you have added your contacts you are ready to go. Other books are available as in-app purchases for \$2.99. Features include a shared pointer that allows you to follow the story together, synchronized page turning, and a video-only mode. The Caribu Bookshop contains material from children's picture book publisher Maverick Arts. See also Kindoma.

Details: Caribu Ltd., <http://caribuapp.com/>. Price: \$free. Ages: 2-up. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: socialization. Entry date: 1/28/2014.



DreamTab

DreamWorks and Fuhu have partnered to create the DreamTab, a new tablet that will have an embedded NFC (Near Field Communications) sensor, giving it the ability to detect toys that have embedded RFID chips. This could turn the tablet into a portal; much like Skylanders or Disney's Infinity. See <http://youtu.be/5n-Lq1VVt-k>.

Details: Fuhu, Inc., www.fuhu.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 3-6. Platform: Android. Teaches/Purpose: An Android tablet for children. Entry date: 1/2/2014.



Family Chat

Family Chat is a tool to get conversations started with your family, anywhere and anytime, from the dinner table to car rides. The app is equipped with 200 questions that are appropriate for kids of all ages. Examples of questions include "If you could change one thing that happened today, what would it be? Why?" or "How many days do you think you could go without showering?" You can view all questions in a list and search by keyword, and select your favorites by tapping the heart icon.

Details: Tag Along K, LLC, . Price: \$1.99. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch (Requires iOS 7.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: a communication tool. Entry date: 1/2/2014.





IdeaCentre Horizon Multimode Table PC

Like an iPad on steroids, the Lenovo IdeaCentre Horizon PC offers a giant (27 inch), responsive touch screen in a thin format that can be used either as a desktop computer or as a table-top computing device. Because it has rechargeable batteries, it can be moved from room to room.

For \$1500, such a device could have big implications for classrooms and/or libraries, although you should keep in mind that this device represents a lot of new technology in one device, so improvements are likely to come. Because it is just 19 pounds, it is easy to pick up and move from room to room.

This was the unit we saw being used for the Scholastic iSPY demo. Using the fold out stand on the back, you can adjust the screen angle. A small wireless keyboard and mouse lets you use it like a traditional computer; or you can lay it on its back and turn it into a table-top PC. Other games include Monopoly, Skype and Air hockey; all accessible through a new Aura Interface, designed so that two or more people can simultaneously access content. Several multi-player games and educational apps are included; more can be downloaded from the Windows Store or the Lenovo App Shop, or by using the BlueStacks App Player.

Includes three exclusive physical accessories: a joystick, a striker, and a set of e-dice. The battery lasts "up to two hours," and the screen offers 10-point multi-touch. Ports include 2x USB 3.0 SuperSpeed, HDMI-in (but not out) 6-in-1 card reader, and Headphone/Mic.

Details: Lenovo, www.lenovo.com. Price: \$1480. Ages: 3-up. Platform: Windows 8. Teaches/Purpose: A Windows 8-based touch screen computer. Entry date: 1/26/2014.



Intel RealSense Technology

Announced January 2014 by Intel for release "sometime this year," RealSense Technology is like Microsoft Kinect for your Windows laptop. The camera can be external (powered by USB) or built in for laptops that have "portable all-in-one" (pAIO) cameras.

The cameras are designed to see your fingers, from a range of 18 to 24 inches. We tested several prototype programs for the camera at CES (see video link, below). In addition, Scholastic Media has launched a new reading program designed specifically for the technology, called Clifford's Reading Adventures. See CES demo at <http://youtu.be/7GEClatQhI>

Details: Intel Corporation, www.intel.com. Price: \$call. Ages: 2-up. Platform: Windows. Teaches/Purpose: A USB powered camera Intel powered PCs. Entry date: 1/13/2014.



It's Me! Peter Pan

Jump into Peter Pan's world, literally, by superimposing your face onto the main character using your iPad's camera. The first step is to capture three expressions (e.g., happy, sad, mad). Next you listen to the story, with you in it. It's a clever way to bring a child into the narrative.

Features include a coloring activity and a jigsaw puzzle. It is possible to replace the sugary narration with your own, thanks to the ability to record your own dialog.

All in all, this app is a strong language experience; offering another hook to pull children into a story. And in this case, it's quite literal. You can toggle between Japanese, Chinese, Korean and English. See the demo: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQOTfbNi_Kk (video provided by publisher).

Details: Etribe, <http://www.tribe.co.kr/main.jsp>. Price: \$free/\$3.99 IAP. Ages: 4-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 4.3 or later). Teaches/Purpose: language, reading, story construction, Japanese, Chinese, Korean and English. Entry date: 12/9/2013.





ParentKit - Parental Controls for iOS

ParentKit is designed to allow parents to set up schedules in order to control a child's iOS device (iPad or iPod touch). You can do this from your own device, which acts as a remote, or directly on your child's device.

According to the PR materials you can schedule your child's use of browsers, purchased apps, shows, etc. Note that you can currently turn on/off these features as part of the iOS operating system already, for no cost.

This utility expands upon the built-in features, with better scheduling features. So you could (in theory) prevent a child from watching movies when they should be sleeping, or playing games when they are supposed to be studying.

Once you download the app to your device, it will prompt you to set up profiles for any of your children's devices that you wish to manage. There is a free one month trial, and then subscriptions are available as in-app purchases for \$24.99 for six months or \$39.99 for one year.

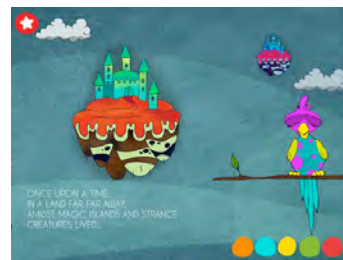
Details: ParentKit, www.parentkit.co. Price: \$free/\$40 year. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 6.1 or later). Teaches/Purpose: a parenting utility. Entry date: 1/21/2014.



Tale of Tales

This interesting app lets you play with story construction, in either English or Italian. Using a set of five colored buttons (instead of traditional page turn buttons) you get to build your own short story. The scenes feature monsters, fairies, elves, ogres, pirates and princesses, and some of the characters are from traditional fairy tales, such as Little Red Riding Hood, her grandmother, the Three Little Pigs, Rapunzel, and so on. By selecting one of the five balls available in each scene, children can play a role in which path the story takes. According to the publisher, there are "more 2,000 combinations" possible.

Details: La Nave Di Clo, www.navediclo.it. Price: \$0.99. Ages: 3-5. Platform: iPad. Teaches/Purpose: reading, literacy, story structure. Entry date: 1/21/2014.

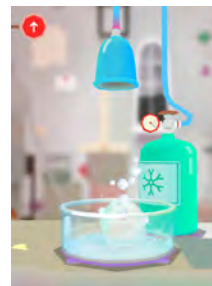


Toca Lab

Can a young child build their own periodic table of the elements? Toca Boca thinks so, by giving each element a human personality, and letting children freely conduct experiments to find where the element fits on the grid.

You might have to lower the temperature of a gas in order to discover a solid, or administer a strong electrical shock in order to turn something into smaller parts. The right procedures cause the element to fall into place on the grid. The content is inspired by the real table, with 118 elements and five experiments, including a Bunsen burner, centrifuge, oscilloscope, cooling agent and test tubes. So does it work? In theory; and the experimental process is interesting. However the concept of a periodic table is abstract; certainly out of range of the published age range for this app (Toca Boca lists ages 3 to 8). Just because you let a younger child play with an abstract concept doesn't build understanding. The testing process would work better if it were applied to meaningful items a child uses everyday, or if a child could understand how the elements relate to his or her life (e.g., you put salt on your french fries). Note: this app keeps track of every element; you can erase all the data and start over in the Settings panel. Created by Marten Bruggemann for Toca Boca.

Details: Toca Boca, <http://tocaboca.com/>. Price: \$2.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone (90 MB). Teaches/Purpose: science, scientific thinking, the elements, attributes. Entry date: 12/9/2013.





Toothsavers Brushing Game

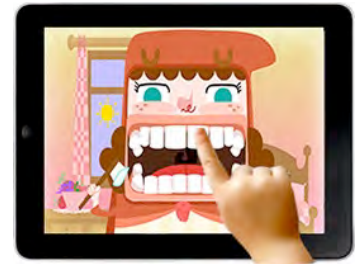
We were less than impressed by the interactive design of this app, but it certainly has good intentions (and a good price -- \$free).

An evil sorceress has cast a wicked spell, leaving everyone's mouth in the kingdom to rot and be overrun by cavities. Your job is to help Toothy and the Toothsavers to save everyone's teeth. You have two minutes to brush and scrub away the spell for each of the kingdom's inhabitants, from the dragon to Little Red Riding Hood. In addition, the app is designed to get you to brush your teeth for two minutes, twice a day, by letting you brush along with each Toothsaver. You can eventually unlock a new Toothsaver. When you brush for 30 days, you'll have a chance to defeat the evil sorceress.

Content includes ten characters, each with their own toothbrushes and food particles to brush, plus ten cartoon teeth. A parents' section lets you designate daily brushing times and monitor brushing progress on a calendar.

This app is part of the Kids' Healthy Mouths campaign, which aims to motivate parents to take action to reduce their children's risk of oral disease.

Details: Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives, <http://2min2x.org/toothsavers/>. Price: \$free. Ages: 3-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (OS 4.1 or later). Teaches/Purpose: proper oral hygiene, health, dentist, teeth. Entry date: 1/21/2014.



Velociraptor: Small and Speedy - Smithsonian's Prehistoric Pals

This app lets children join Velociraptor and his band of fierce predators along with the some of the fastest runners in the land. You can explore pictures and learn vocabulary, as well as personalize the story with your own narration. Other features include: highlighted narration; tappable words and pictures; select a scene with easy-to-use navigation; and parental controls. The app has been "carefully reviewed by paleontologists at the Smithsonian Institution and provides fascinating information on the prehistoric world."

Details: Oceanhouse Media, www.oceanhousemedia.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 3-8. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: science, dinosaurs. Entry date: 1/30/2014.



VEX IQ System

The new \$300 VEX IQ system was announced at CES 2014. On first glance, it seems easier to use than LEGO EV3 system, and it has rechargeable lithium-ion batteries for both the motors and the controller (EV3 uses AAs).

Contents include 650 pieces, the "Robot Brain" and the controller. The basic kit includes two motors, a touch LED, a color sensor, gyroscope, bumper switch and distance sensor (note that parts may vary).

You can program the controller with a computer using ModC or RobotC. The VEX Robot Brain offers 12 ports (LEGO has six), and VEX PR claims an "easier out of the box experience" for younger students. See the video at <http://youtu.be/jaleC6AZOvg>.

Details: VEX Robotics, www.vexrobotics.com/. Price: \$300. Ages: 8-up. Platform: Smart Toy. Teaches/Purpose: programming, robotics. Entry date: 1/21/2014.





Zoo Animals: Touch, Look, Listen

This is the second title in StoryToys series of visual dictionaries - the first was Touch, Look, Listen: My First Words (CTR December 2013). The design is similar. In Zoo Animals, children are introduced to more than 60 popular animals from around the world. The animals are grouped into ten different categories, including big and tall animals, creepy crawlies, animals that swim and fly, noisy animals, polar animals and desert animals. Each page is introduced by a playful rhyme, and bright and colorful images pop-up as each 3D scene opens. In addition, when your child taps a picture, they see and hear the associated word, helping children to learn new words as well as reinforce those they already know. The app can also be used as a language learning tool by selecting a language in the menu, allowing children to explore Spanish, Chinese, French and German. Other features include: 10 interactive 3D pop-up scenes and over 60 words; choice of English, French, German, Spanish and Chinese as either primary or secondary language; fully narrated in each language by professional actors; highly-detailed photographs showing animals as they are in real life; and calming soundtrack and animal sound effects.

Details: StoryToys, www.storytoys.com. Price: \$1.99. Ages: 2-4. Platform: iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch (iOS 5.0 or later). Teaches/Purpose: vocabulary, reading, ESL, German, French, Spanish, Chinese. Entry date: 1/21/2014.

Zoom It

Zoom it is a clip on, 30 power microscope designed for tablets and smart phones. While it is branded as a Kurio product, it works on other devices, as long as the outside camera is located on the edge of the device.

The lens on the microscope isn't the best, but it works. It delivers a fixed x30 magnification area, and has a focus adjustment wheel plus white LED lighting. The device is powered by 3 AAA batteries (not included). There are no wires or tablet settings (i.e., this is not a bluetooth device). The free app, called "Zoom it" works on Android or iOS devices and lets you take and edit photos, create an album and turn photos into puzzles.

In the prototype we tested, the image was OK; but not nearly as good as the Proscope. The price is far different, too. You get what you pay for.

The photos can be specialized with different effects like "thermal," and there are also frames, stickers and the ability to add text.

Details: KD Interactive, www.kurioworld.com/us/. Price: \$50. Ages: 5-up. Platform: iPad, iPhone, Android. Teaches/Purpose: A tablet microscope. Entry date: 1/20/2014.

